

Secane, PA -- On Thursday, January 31, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) convened a Business Development Roundtable at Pioneer Machine & Tooling Company in Secane. The event was organized as a follow-on to the Congressman's December 3rd Business Procurement Summit in Springfield.

— "Along with all our area chambers of commerce, small business owners and labor leaders, I am committed to increasing our regional ability to better compete for federal and commercial contracts. I recently assumed responsibility as the Co-Chair of the Congressional Rotocraft Caucus and convened this meeting to talk directly with local experts in that industry. Understanding their capabilities and frustrations is vital to developing an effective long-term legislative agenda for an industry that has been a key component of our economy for generations," commented Congressman Sestak.

Participants of the event included: Young C. Choe, Owner of Pioneer Machine & Tooling, Co (Secane), Chuck Allen, VP for Rotorcraft Systems, Boeing (Ridley Park) Rachel Carson, President/ CEO, Helicopter Tech, Inc (King of Prussia), Dr. Novis Smith, Vice President, Technology, LithChem Energy (Folcroft), Dr. M. Therese Flaherty, Director, Wharton Small Business Development Center, Glenn McAllister, Director, Widener University Small Business Development Center in Chester, John W. Piasecki, Vice President, Piasecki Aircraft Corp (Essington), Katherine Leighton, VP of Applied Technology, Dynamic Defense Materials, LLC in Boothwyn, Scott Jenkins, SMJ Corporation (Conshohocken) and Lt. General Robert Kelley, U.S.A.F. (RET), a local defense consultant.

A wide range of issues were discussed including: 1) how small manufacturing businesses can optimize production capacity in an unpredictable business cycle, 2) ways to attract and retain skilled workers, and 3) best practices for navigating the government procurement process. Specifically, Lieutenant General Robert Kelley suggested use of recruitmilitary.com to reach out to returning Veterans with helicopter maintenance skills. Chuck Allen indicated that Boeing plans to hire an executive at the facility in Ridley Park to raise general awareness of subcontracting needs. John Piasecki talked about his company's efforts to put together a coalition of companies that perform different tasks, so they may be able to bid jointly on future projects. This would allow for better work force flexibility and would appeal to prime contractors who could then deal with one group rather than several different companies.

The Congressman concluded the gathering by thanking all in attendance for their efforts. "I am especially appreciative of the Boeing and Piasecki initiatives. Together, they can significantly improve the ability of local sub-contractors to anticipate the needs of larger firms and adjust their capacity accordingly. Innovative ideas, collaboration and a skilled workforce are the keys to protecting and enhancing our economy and quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region."

Today, Congressman Sestak met a panel of experts at Cabrini College to address the issues of work force development in a changing economy. In March, Congressman Sestak will convene a similar gathering with Modeling & Simulation industry representatives.